1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

614 554 Uru *warugé* should carry game and honey for the men of Morane and Unapane.

291 184 Some of the village Veddas of those days had cloth, and when dancing to the *yaku* they wore the long cloth garment called *kangalla*; the wilder Veddas had no cloth and wore leaves, but it was not clear whether they had not also a certain amount of bark cloth which was their ordinary covering, and leaves may have been worn in addition when they invoked the *yaku*[1].

685 609 778 826 The old man knew of the custom of a man keeping a piece of human liver in his betel pouch; it was universal and in his young days every Vedda desired to have a piece. Strangers, even Veddas, who intruded on the hunting grounds would be killed and their liver taken, no other part of the dead man being used, and the custom gave rise neither to warfare nor to vendettas[2].

764 768 Caves in which a death occurred were deserted, the corpse being covered with leaves; perhaps men very near dissolution were left before death had actually occurred, but this did not seem certain. Bones found in the cave when the group returned to it after an interval of some ten or twelve years were thrown away quite carelessly. The spirits of the dead became the Nae Yaku who, with Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka, gave game and prosperity. The *kirikoraha* ceremony was performed for the Nae Yaku, and *adukku* (cooked food), which even in the old days consisted of coconut and rice, was offered to them. The wilder Veddas gave nothing to the Buddhist priests and made no offerings at shrines, nor did they know the Kataragam God, Kanda Swami, though the village Veddas worshipped him and knew that Walliame had been taken to wife by him, and honey was presented to the goddess at certain shrines, especially one at Kokote Sila, frequented by the village Veddas.

775 769 771 184

535 751 A few of the village Veddas would dance for the Sinhalese in order to protect their cattle, bring prosperity to their villages, and secure them from epidemics; they would dance *kolamaduwa* which the old man pointed out was derived from a

[1] Cf. p. 213.
[2] For details of this custom see Chapter VIII.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Adoption is not practised, for the custom of a near relative looking after children who have lost their parents cannot be called by this name. 597 768

Dances play no part in the domestic life of the Veddas, for, although Veddas may perform a few steps of a dance as a sign of pleasure, their dances are mostly if not entirely ceremonial. 535

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION

764 WHEN a man or woman dies from sickness the body is left in the cave or rock-shelter in which death took place. The body is not washed, dressed or ornamented in any way but is generally allowed to lie in the natural supine position and is covered with leaves and branches.

This was formerly the universal custom and still persists among the less sophisticated Veddas, who sometimes in addition place a large stone upon the chest of the dead man. This old custom, for which no reason could be given, is still observed at Sitala Wanniya where the body is still covered with branches and left where death has occurred. As soon as these matters 768 are attended to, and it seemed that they are carried through as quickly as possible after death, the small community leaves the cave or place in which the death has occurred and avoids it for a long time. It was sometimes stated that its members would never return, but we know of at least two cases in which sons returned to the cave in which their fathers died after many years, and we have no doubt that this statement means no more than that no one approached the cave for a long time. It was always difficult to obtain even a crude estimate of the lapse of time between events, but there was some reason to believe that in one of the two instances the shelter in which death occurred was untenanted for about twelve years. In any event it is certain that Veddas did return to caves in which a death had occurred, and that if any bones were left, no difficulty was made about picking these up and casting them into the jungle[1].

[1] This accords with the experience of the Das Sarnin who say:—"We never found the least difficulty when collecting skeletons of Veddas. They [the Vedda]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

It should be mentioned that no fire was lit near the corpse or water left by it when the living deserted the cave. Among the majority, including the two wildest groups of Veddas, there is no avoidance of any of the property of the dead man, and the contents of his betel bag would be eaten directly after his death, but among the members of another group of Veddas (Henebedda), who must be regarded as pure-blooded although their system of magic shows Sinhalese influence, the betel bag, unless it were a very good one, would be left with the corpse, and in any case its contents would not be eaten, but left near the dead man. The areca nut cutter and lime box, which during life were always carried in the bag, would not be left with the corpse, but before they were used by the living, measures were taken of which the avowed design was to render these objects harmless. Thus the old headman of the Henebedda Veddas exposed his father's lime box and areca cutters under a bush for a period which was certainly longer than ten but probably less than thirty days. It was necessary to do this, since if these objects had been used immediately, the individuals using them would probably have contracted the same illness as that from which the dead man suffered, and on further questioning the old man explained that the *yaka* producing the illness from which his father had died would for some time, and in some way which he could not define, remain connected with the chewing apparatus which the dead man had used constantly during his last illness.

At Bandaraduwa we were able to ascertain what was done after the death of a man named Tuta which had occurred in a neighbouring settlement two days before our arrival. The grave was dug by two of the man's brothers who carried the body to it; nothing was buried in the grave, not even the dead man's

were always ready to show us the place in which...they had buried. When we proceeded to dig up the skeleton they for the most part looked on with interest and without showing the least sign of excitement, and when it was necessary to pick all the small hand and feet bones out of the sandy soil they were perfectly ready to assist. We were always told willingly who was buried in a particular spot. The place of burial was always shown us by the relatives of the deceased...thus in Mudugala near Ommi a father showed us the grave of his daughter and in the Nilgala district a son led us to the grave of his father." *Op. cit.* p. 494.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

own departed; spirits, real and intimate, inhabiting like themselves rock and tree and stream; human enough to pester or assist, to take vengeance if angered, and, if propitiated, tutelary over the Vedda's abodes. It is owing to the maliciousness of these spirits, and less from any fear of wild animals, that the Vedda is averse to travelling alone in the jungle; though, when necessity compels, he will do so, armed only with his little axe. Nor do they permit their women to adorn themselves too much for fear of attracting the *hetha* (devil).*

When a person dies it is the *hetha* that killed him; and the *hetha* of the dead one remains by the corpse and haunts the vicinity for years. Hence the great fear these people have of their dead; a fear that sometimes makes them cover with leaves and abandon a dying person, be he or she their best beloved, lest their necks be squeezed; a fear that keeps them away for years from caves where deaths have occurred.

In the course of time the spirit of a dead person loses its individuality in a general spirit world, the spirits of the more recently dead, and therefore the better known to succeeding generations, supplanting the older. A belief embodying the beautiful thought, that we really do not die until those who knew us and loved us are also dead.

The Vedda religion then is a cult of the spirits of the dead; not so much an ancestor worship, though a few names of long dead Veddas, such as Bilinde Yakka and Kande Yakka have a place in it, as a homage to spirits recently deceased (*Nae-Yakka*).†

The named demons of the pure Veddas are few, and their propitiatory ceremonies but two or three. Nevertheless, a half-Vedda devil-dancer of Galmede gave me the names of a hundred devils, and unctuously expounded a demonology as involved as it was terrible; taking special delight in describing a dance in which men with hideous masks and jangling bells attached to deer-skin greaves, their bodies stained in imitation of blood, swayed great Vedda *audes* mounted on carved handles, and made the forest echo to thundering drum-beats and demoniac yells.

Of male demons there were:—(1) Tree demons of the *Na* and *Bo* tree; seven to each tree in order of precedence: (2) Rock demons (*Gal-vanniyas*) named after various hills: (3) Flower demons (*Ravathath*): (4) *Bandara* demons; (5) *Vanniyas*—the spirits of four Veddas who were crushed to death in a cave by the fall of the rock overhead; with a shout of "ha" they were transformed into devils. Then there were innumerable female demons, a wife to each male demon (*Kalusalees*, *Peti-hanayas* and *Hanna-hanayas*).

From all this it will not be wondered at that the Veddas are highly superstitious, and ascribe to many an ordinary incident of life supernatural significance. It is, for instance, an ill omen to meet a Buddhist priest or Moorman when setting out on a journey, or to knock the big toe against a stone or stump. Should a gekko cry when a plan is under discussion, or a blood-sucker‡ or Brahamin lizard fall on one, the portent is bad.

*The Veddas seem to make no distinction between the words devil and spirit, the term *yakka* being used for either; thus *Gal-Yakka* means rock-demon, *Nae-Yakka* ancestral spirit. *Hetha* also means spirit or devil and is, if anything, the more malevolent being. *Vanniya* is another word synonymous with *yakka* and *hetha*.

†The Veddas, by Seligmann: page 30.

‡A species of lizard.